

# From Interview Impressions to Workplace Reality: Re-thinking Impression Management and Person-Organization Fit

**\*Beauttah M Waweru**  
Zetech University, Kenya.

**\*Corresponding Author**

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## ABSTRACT

Organizations rely heavily on job interviews to select candidates; however, high interview performance does not always translate into effective workplace behavior. This literature review examines reasons for this mismatch through the lenses of Impression Management Theory and Person-Organization (P-O) Fit Theory. Impression Management Theory (IM) explains how candidates strategically present themselves during interviews to create favorable impressions that may not reflect their authentic behaviors. P-O fit theory emphasizes alignment between individual values and organizational culture, suggesting that misalignment can result in workplace behaviors that diverge from interview expectations. The review integrates recent evidence (2020-2025) on digital recruitment, personality traits, and organizational socialization to propose an integrated framework explaining the interview-behavior gap. The findings offer practical insights for improving recruitment accuracy and predicting job performance.

**KEYWORDS:** Interview Performance, Workplace Behavior, Impression Management, Person-Organization Fit, Recruitment, Employee Selection.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Recruitment and selection are critical organizational processes designed to attract and identify candidates who will perform effectively and integrate well within the organizational culture. Among selection tools, the job interview remains the most widely used. Despite its popularity, empirical research consistently shows that excellent interview ratings do not always predict subsequent job performance or workplace conduct [1]. This discrepancy raises important questions about the reliability of interviews as predictors of real-world behavior.

Two theoretical perspectives provide useful explanations. Impression Management Theory (IMT) suggests that candidates, consciously or unconsciously, manipulate their self-presentation during interviews to appear competent, motivated, and value-aligned [2]. Person-Organization Fit (P-O Fit) Theory emphasizes value congruence between individuals and organizations, proposing that misalignment leads to dissatisfaction, reduced performance, and counterproductive behaviors [3]. This review explores how strategic self-presentation and cultural misalignment jointly contribute to the mismatch between interview performance and subsequent workplace behavior.

## 2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

### 2.1 IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT THEORY

Impression Management Theory originates from Goffman's [4] dramaturgical perspective, which conceptualizes social interaction as performance-based. Individuals actively manage the impressions they convey to others, particularly in evaluative and high-stakes contexts.

In job interviews, impression management is not only expected but often rewarded. Candidates engage in behaviors such as self-promotion (exaggerating achievements), ingratiation (agreeing with the interviewer's values), image crafting (tailoring narratives to job requirements), and defensive omission (concealing weaknesses). Contemporary research emphasizes that interviews create an environment where short-term impression optimization is more salient than authentic self-expression [5].

### 2.2 PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT THEORY

Person-organization fit refers to the degree of compatibility between an individual's values, personality, and behavior and the organization's culture, norms, and goals [6]. Fit can be conceptualized as value congruence, needs-supplies fit, and demands-abilities fit. High P-O fit predicts job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and prosocial behavior, while poor

fit is associated with stress, withdrawal, deviance, and turnover [7]. Critically, P-O fit is often assessed indirectly during interviews, making it particularly vulnerable to distortion through impression management.

### 2.3 INTERVIEW VALIDITY AND THE LIMITS OF TRADITIONAL INTERVIEWS

Interview validity has long been debated. Structured interviews show higher predictive validity, but unstructured interviews are susceptible to biases such as halo effect, similarity bias, and attractiveness bias [8]. Recent studies also highlight the influence of AI and automated screening on interview outcomes. AI-based assessments can inadvertently amplify IM by prioritizing cues like speech fluency and facial expressions, which can be manipulated [9]. This means the mismatch can be reinforced by modern recruitment systems if they are not designed to detect deceptive cues.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY JOB INTERVIEWS

Post-2020 literature shows that impression management has intensified due to increased competition for limited positions, standardized competency frameworks, predictable interview questions, and online interview coaching and AI-generated responses. Candidates strategically adapt their self-presentation based on perceived organizational values and interviewer reactions [10]. Interviews increasingly measure social effectiveness and adaptability, rather than stable job-related behaviors [11].

Recent research highlights that IM is highly contextual and influenced by situational pressures, including interview structure, interviewer behavior, and perceived stakes of the job [12]. Structured interviews reduce bias but still allow IM tactics to influence ratings, especially when interviewers rely on social cues rather than behavioral evidence [13]. Personality traits influence the extent of IM: high self-monitoring individuals are more likely to adjust their behavior to match perceived expectations, increasing the likelihood of mismatches between interview and actual behavior [14]. Individuals with lower honesty–humility scores may use deceptive IM tactics more frequently, leading to higher interview ratings but poorer job performance [15].

### 3.2 PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT AND WORKPLACE BEHAVIOR

P-O fit is the degree of alignment between an individual's values and the organization's culture [6]. A strong P-O fit is associated with job satisfaction, commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior, whereas poor fit predicts turnover, disengagement, and counterproductive work behavior [7,16]. Recent evidence indicates that P-O fit can be influenced by digital cues. Recruiters increasingly evaluate fit through online profiles and social media, which may lead to inaccurate fit perceptions due to curated digital identities [17]. Moreover, a meta-analysis [18] found that P-O fit predicts performance mainly through psychological comfort and reduced stress, suggesting that fit is both a value alignment and a coping resource.

Employees who entered organizations through impression-managed alignment often experience cognitive dissonance, resulting in behavioral withdrawal or norm violation. This mismatch is more pronounced in organizations with strong cultures and rigid norms, where employees must conform to high behavioral expectations [19].

### 3.3 INTEGRATIVE PERSPECTIVE: HOW IM AND P-O FIT INTERACT

The integrated model suggests that interview performance reflects both IM and genuine competencies, while workplace behavior depends on fit and organizational context. When IM is high, and P-O fit is low, the mismatch is most severe. In contrast, when both IM and P-O fit are high, the interview predicts workplace behavior more accurately [16,20]. Organizational onboarding, supervision quality, and feedback systems moderate the mismatch. Effective onboarding can reduce mismatch by clarifying expectations and aligning values early [21]. Conversely, poor onboarding increases the likelihood of misbehavior or disengagement [22].

## 4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Table 1

Stage	Key Construct	Mechanism	Outcome
Selection (Interview)	Impression Management	Self-promotion, ingratiation, image crafting, omission	High interview ratings; potential misrepresentation
Post-hire (Workplace)	Person-Organization Fit	Value congruence, needs-supplies, demands–abilities	Engagement, performance, or withdrawal, depending on fit
Mismatch	IM × P-O Fit Interaction	High IM + Low Fit = divergence; High IM + High Fit = alignment	Interview-behavior gap or accurate prediction

## 5. DISCUSSION

This literature review reveals that the mismatch between interview performance and subsequent workplace behavior is a systematic outcome of two interacting mechanisms: impression management (IM) and person-organization (P-O) fit. IM is amplified in modern recruitment environments due to digital tools and AI-driven selection methods, allowing candidates to construct curated identities that may not reflect actual competencies or values [9,23]. At the same time, P-O fit assessments conducted during interviews are often based on verbal claims rather than observable behaviors, making fit judgments vulnerable to manipulation [24].

The integrated model suggests that IM and P-O fit operate at different stages of the employment cycle. IM primarily influences selection-stage outcomes, while P-O fit shapes post-hire adjustment and long-term behavior. This two-stage process explains why interviews may accurately predict short-term impressions but fail to forecast long-term performance.

A major contribution of recent literature is the recognition that IM is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions. Candidates use social media, online portfolios, and AI-generated responses to craft favorable impressions. This shift intensifies the mismatch because recruiters may not differentiate between real competence and digital performance. Video interviews can reward confident articulation and charisma rather than job skills [20]. AI screening tools may amplify these biases by prioritizing superficial cues.

Personality traits also influence IM. Individuals with high self-monitoring, narcissistic tendencies, or low honesty-humility are more likely to use deceptive IM tactics [14,15]. Therefore, interview performance should be interpreted with caution, especially when it is disproportionately driven by self-promotional behavior rather than job-relevant evidence.

Organizational context can either reduce or amplify the mismatch. Strong onboarding, clear role expectations, and supportive leadership can mitigate the effects of IM by aligning employee behavior with organizational norms [21]. Conversely, weak socialization can exacerbate mismatch, as employees remain unclear about expectations and fail to internalize organizational values [25].

## 6. IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICE

The findings of this study offer important implications for human resource (HR) practice, particularly in enhancing the predictive validity and fairness of employee selection and early employment experiences.

First, organizations should adopt multi-method selection systems rather than relying solely on traditional interviews. Structured interviews should be complemented with work sample tests, behavioral simulations, and validated personality or integrity assessments. Combining multiple assessment methods allows organizations to triangulate candidate information, thereby reducing the influence of impression management and interviewer bias. Such integrative selection systems improve the accuracy of predicting future job performance, cultural fit, and ethical behavior, leading to more informed hiring decisions.

Secondly, recruiters should prioritize evidence-based, behaviorally anchored interview questions that require candidates to describe concrete past experiences rather than respond to hypothetical situations. Behavioral questions grounded in the principle that past behavior is a strong predictor of future behavior help distinguish genuine competencies from rehearsed or exaggerated responses. This approach also enhances consistency across candidates, improves inter-rater reliability, and minimizes subjective interpretations by interviewers.

Thirdly, the deployment of AI-driven recruitment tools must be carefully calibrated to mitigate bias and enhance assessment depth. AI systems should be designed to move beyond surface-level cues such as facial expressions, voice tone, or keyword frequency, which may inadvertently reinforce cultural or gender bias. Instead, AI tools should be integrated with validated behavioral and competency-based assessments, supported by regular audits for fairness, transparency, and explainability. HR practitioners must remain accountable for AI-assisted decisions to ensure ethical and legally defensible recruitment practices.

Fourthly, organizations should strengthen onboarding and mentorship processes to reinforce organizational values, clarify performance expectations, and support early employee adjustment. Effective onboarding programs, paired with structured mentorship or coaching, help bridge the gap between interview impressions and actual workplace behavior. These practices foster psychological safety, engagement, and ethical conduct, reducing early disengagement, turnover, and performance misalignment.

Overall, these implications underscore the need for a holistic and evidence-based approach to talent acquisition and integration. By aligning selection methods, digital tools, and post-hire support systems, organizations can improve hiring outcomes, promote fairness, and sustain employee performance over time.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite growing literature, gaps remain. First, there is a lack of longitudinal research that tracks interview performance and subsequent behavior over time. Second, Global South contexts remain under-researched, limiting generalizability. Thirdly, the ethical implications of IM, especially regarding fairness and deception, require deeper analysis. Finally, AI-driven recruitment tools are evolving rapidly, and their long-term impact on the interview-behavior gap remains unclear. Future research should adopt longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to test the integrated model and explore the role of organizational context and digital recruitment tools in diverse cultural settings.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This literature review demonstrates that mismatches between interview performance and workplace behavior arise from systematic incentive structures that reward impression management and from organizational limitations in accurately assessing person-organization fit. Addressing this challenge requires improved selection practices and stronger post-hire socialization mechanisms. Interviews should be viewed as initial signals, not definitive predictors, of employee behavior.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

This review highlights the need for more robust and ethically grounded recruitment and onboarding practices. First, organizations should adopt multi-method selection systems that combine structured interviews with work-sample tests, behavioral simulations, and validated personality or integrity assessments to reduce the influence of impression management and improve predictive validity.

Secondly, behaviorally anchored interview questions should be prioritized over hypothetical or self-promotional responses. Focusing on verifiable past behaviors enhances consistency, reduces interviewer bias, and improves the accuracy of assessing job-relevant competencies. Thirdly, the use of AI-driven recruitment tools requires careful governance. AI systems should complement, not replace, human judgment and be regularly audited for bias, transparency, and explainability to ensure fair and accountable decision-making.

Finally, organizations should strengthen onboarding and early socialization processes, including mentorship and clear role expectations, to align employee behavior with organizational values and mitigate post-hire performance misalignment.

Together, these practices support more accurate, fair, and sustainable hiring outcomes by addressing both selection-stage distortions and post-hire adjustment challenges.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

## ORCID

BMW: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4263-299X>

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